

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8409

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIBREVILLE 2020

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GB

SUBJ: BONGO CHASTISES MINISTERS AGAIN

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

SUMMARY: IN TELEVISION ADDRESS OCTOBER 4 AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SPEECH OCTOBER 5, PRESIDENT BONGO CHASTISED GOG MINISTERS
FOR POOR PERFORMANCE AND ORDERED HIGHER PRIORITY FOR
EDUCATION AND HEALTH FIELDS. END SUMMARY.

1. MORNING OCTOBER 4, DAY SCHOOLS REOPENED FOR FALL TERM,
PRESIDENT AND MRS. BONGO ACCOMPANIED MINEDUCATION ASSELE
ON TOUR OF FOUR LIBREVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOLS. HORRIFIED AT
POOR CONDITIONS, PRESIDENT TOOK TO TELEVISION SAME EVENING
TO DEPLORE SAD STATE OF SCHOOLS, TO CRITICIZE RESPONSIBLE
OFFICIALS, AND TO PROMISE PROMPT REMEDIAL ACTION. IN
PARTICULAR, PARESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT LOCAL CONSTRUCTION
FIRM (DRAGAGES) HAS BEEN GIVEN CONTRACT TO CONSTRUCT
ADDITIONAL CLASSROOMS ON URGENT BASIS SO THAT ALL LIBRE-
VILLE PUPILS CAN BE ACCOMODATED ON FULL-DAY BASIS BY
END OF OCTOBER.

2. PRESIDENT RETURNED TO SAME THEME IN COURSE HIS REMARKS
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FOLLOWING DAY AT OPENING SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,

AGAIN CHASTISING OFFICIALS WHO FAILED CORRECT DEFICIENCIES OF SCHOOL SYSTEM AND INSTRUCTING DEPUTIES TO GIVE SPECIAL PRIORITY TO EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. BONGO THEN SHIFTED HIS CRITICISM TO INCLUDE HEALTH SERVICES, DESCRIBING LIBREVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL AS "PIG-STY", SCORING "DRUNKEN NURSES" WHO WORK THERE, AND PLEDGING DRASTIC ACTION IN THAT FIELD AS WELL. FROM THIS, PRESIDENT WENT ON TO BROADER TARGET OF GENERAL MINISTERIAL INEFFICIENCY, ATTACKING MINISTERS WHO "WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS" DO NOTHING BUT "PLAY POLITICS" AND "MAKE SPEECHES IN THEIR LITTLE FIEFS." BONGO CONCLUDED THIS PORTION OF HIS REMARKS BY EXHORTING MINISTERS TO CONCENTRATE ON WORK OF THEIR DEPARTMENTS AND LEAVE POLITICS TO HIM, AND BY PROMISING TO "TAKE THINGS IN HAND" PERSONALLY. END UNCLASSIFIED BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

3. COMMENT: TWO SPEECHES SHOWED BONGO AT HIS CROWD-PLEASING BEST, DEMONSTRATING CONCERN FOR PROBLEMS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE AND PUBLICLY CHASTISING "DO-NOTHING" MINISTERS FOR FAILING TO TAKE NECESSARY ACTION. WHETHER HIS PERFORMANCE WILL HAVE ANY PRATICAL IMPACT ON PROBLEMS HE CITED REMAINS TO BE SEEN. WHILE SOME PALLIATIVES IN LIBREVILLE SCHOOL SITUATION MAY BE POSSIBLE, FUNDAMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH FIELDS REQUIRE BOTH FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES WHICH ARE SIMPLY NOT AVAILABLE IN SHORT-TERM FUTURE. MEANWHILE, MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY WILL PRESUMABLY REMAIN BELOW LEVEL WHICH IMPATIENT PRESIDENT SEEKS, FURTHER INCREASING HIS EVIDENT FRUSTRATION AT BEING UNABLE GET THINGS DONE AND ENCOURAGING HIS TENDENCY TO CONCENTRATE POWER WITHIN PRESIDENCY STAFF DESPITE CONTRADICTORY EXHORTATIONS TO MINISTERS TO EXERCISE GREATER RESPONSIBILITY. STEIGMAN

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